

**ACVFA Subcommittee on Public Outreach**

**Draft Report for ACVFA Members' Review**

*September 19, 2008*

## **Glossary**

ACVFA – Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid

ADS - Automated Directives System

CAP's - Country Operation Plans

CBOs- Community Based Organizations

DART - Disaster Assistance Response Team

DOC - Development Outreach and Communications

DOD - U.S. Department of Defense

FBOs - Faith Based Organizations

FSN - Foreign Service National

GDA - Global Development Alliance

GDC - Global Development Commons

LPA - Legislative and Public Affairs

M Bureau- Bureau for Management

NGOs - Non-governmental organizations

PA – Public Affairs

PAO - Public Affairs Officer

PAS - Embassy Public Affairs Section

PEPFAR - The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

PMI - The President's Malaria Initiative

PR - Public Relations

PSA - Public Service Announcement

PSC - Personal Service Contractor

PVOs - Private Voluntary Organizations

State/ F - Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance

State/R - State Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Bureau

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

USG - United State Governmen

## **Introduction.**

Foreign assistance is at the center of the most comprehensive reformulation of the nation's strategic doctrines in more than half a century and the development community will play a key role in meeting the nation's unprecedented challenges.

This is not the first time U.S. foreign assistance has confronted such an important challenge. It occurred in 1947 when Secretary of State George C. Marshall unveiled his plan to rebuild a continent devastated by war. And it occurred in the Administration of President John F. Kennedy when he established the *Alliance for Progress* that significantly increased U.S. foreign assistance in the developing world and countered the aggressive designs and influence of the Soviet Union.

Today the United States is threatened by new enemies and, as the events of 9/11 drove home, it faces new risks. In 2002 the *National Security Strategy* changed the strategic environment when it said we are now menaced less by conquering states than by failing and failed states.

Few at the time grasped the implications of this seemingly simple statement, or the distance it puts between us now and during the Cold War era. It means that the United States is no longer menaced as we were in the past by large, well-equipped armies massed behind clearly defined state borders under the authority of clearly defined structures of command. It means that the locus of the national security threats that we face as a nation has shifted to the developing world, where grievances that fuel fanatical hatred are found and exploited, and where the new enemies of this country find a base of operations.

Countering terrorism is not the only rationale for a heightened interest in development and developing countries. Today's world is both smaller and more interconnected than the one in which our parents and grandparents came of age. In the past, distant and remote human tragedies, often affecting sizable portions of the world, were unseen.

Now, around-the-clock communications make them part of the public's consciousness and matters for immediate concern. The humanitarian impulses of Americans have brought a deeper engagement with the developing world, which given this country's wealth and influence, is reinforced by a sense of responsibility.

We now understand that our own well-being as a nation is more closely linked to events in developing countries on fronts including trade and investment, infectious diseases, environmental protection, international crime, weapons proliferation, migration and the advance of democracy and human rights, among others.

All of this helps to explain the renewed interest by Americans in foreign aid in Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other areas of the world which we hear about regularly through news reports and the Internet.

## ***Knowledge of U.S. Aid is Limited***

It remains the case, however, that this renewed interest by Americans in foreign assistance is by and large characterized by only a rudimentary understanding of the design and scope of current foreign assistance programs. Currently, public opinion is riddled with misconceptions and prejudices that must be countered if we are to sustain the foreign assistance commitment that our humanitarian and national security commitments require.

In fact, public awareness of U.S. foreign assistance is low both at home and overseas. Public attitudes in the United States and abroad towards foreign assistance reveal a paradox: *Americans vastly over-estimate the amount of aid provided, while the recipients substantially under-estimate it.* Moreover, while many Americans imagine a world flush with U.S. aid, research has shown that citizens in countries receiving U.S. foreign assistance, including large beneficiaries such as Egypt and Indonesia, know almost nothing of U.S. aid programs in their countries. Here and abroad, these low levels of awareness reinforce the belief that American foreign assistance has done little for the recipients.

Aid does not magically communicate itself. The prevailing ignorance regarding the levels and effects of foreign assistance in America, and in recipient countries, reflects a failure of communications. In part, this results from a lack of effective communications on behalf of USAID due to restrictions that result from limited resources and government organization. It also occurs because no public or private entity is responsible for communicating about U.S. aid in general. The reality of large-scale, humanitarian foreign assistance efforts does not ensure that the public will become aware of the programs' value without significant, focused and effective communications efforts here and abroad.

## ***Stronger Support Requires Better Information***

The accuracy of public information about the cost of U.S. overseas foreign assistance strongly influences whether or not Americans want to increase or decrease aid. Studies of American public opinion have consistently found that the public believes that as much as 40 percent of the Federal budget is committed to foreign aid (more than 80 times the true figure). How much people know about current programs directly shapes their views of the appropriate aid level. When the question of whether to cut or raise foreign aid is asked, without any data to challenge the prevailing misinformation there is massive support for a reduction—64 percent in a Chicago Council on Foreign Relations survey in 2004.

However, after current aid levels were explained and proposals for increases presented, the public in a University of Maryland poll supported annual increases of \$17 billion in economic foreign assistance, \$19 billion to combat AIDS and \$25 billion for disaster assistance. Similarly, when the Millennium Development Goals and the costs of meeting them were explained, 58 percent of Americans favored \$25 billion in extra aid to achieve the goals. The American public needs a more accurate accounting of the level of foreign

assistance if public generosity and support for aid in principle is to translate into an aid policy that reflects public wishes.

The second major barrier to domestic support for aid is lack of public knowledge about aid effectiveness. Polls show major public doubts about the usefulness of foreign assistance, including concerns about both corruption in its administration and the results of programs and projects. A recent study for the Gates Foundation on public attitudes to global health assistance found that two-thirds of voters were not able to say whether U.S. foreign assistance was effective or ineffective. The media environment about such issues is overwhelmingly negative: seven in 10 said what they had heard about global health efforts in the preceding three months was mostly negative. Only one American voter in five believes U.S. aid is reaching the people most in need, the Gates Foundation discovered. The study concluded: “Our problem is not a problem of awareness – our problem is a lack of perceived progress.” Unless the word is spread about the impressive results many U.S. aid programs have delivered, public support is likely to remain weak and ambivalent.

### ***Recipient Country Publics Know Little About U.S. Aid***

Polling also reveals that recipient country publics know little about U.S. foreign assistance. This holds true even in countries with large U.S. foreign assistance programs. According to focus groups in 2004 for the Council on Foreign Relations in Egypt and Indonesia, recipients of the largest U.S. foreign assistance programs in their regions demonstrated minimal public awareness of U.S. assistance. Asked how much U.S. foreign assistance their countries had received in the previous 10 years, estimates of college-educated focus group members were in the low millions. The correct figures were \$7 billion for Egypt and \$1 billion for Indonesia, so the public view was between 100 and 1,000 times less than the reality.

When a list of a dozen items on major U.S. aid programs to the developing world and their own countries was tested, generally participants were unaware of most of the programs, including major education, health, and democracy projects in Egypt and Indonesia that spent hundreds of millions of dollars. Subsequent polling by USAID produced similar results. Only 40 percent of Egyptians knew their country received foreign assistance from the U.S., and just 10 percent to 20 percent were aware of specific programs for health, education and business. Likewise, even with the highly-publicized U.S. disaster relief programs after the 2004 tsunami, only one-tenth to one-third of Indonesians in five large cities were aware of benefits from U.S. programs to promote education, health and jobs.

The lack of awareness of aid is one of the reasons for the unpopularity of the U.S. in many of the recipient countries. Although they have a variety of feelings about America and Americans, positive and negative, since 9/11 the negative has been uppermost in public perceptions of America in many developing countries, particularly in the Muslim world.

One major aspect of the rise of anti-Americanism is that images of the U.S. in overseas media, particularly in Muslim countries, are overwhelmingly negative and focused on televised images of violence and aggression, especially in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was noted by participants in the Council on Foreign Relations focus groups, who described these as the major elements in coverage of U.S. politics and policies that they saw. This is the flip side of the non-coverage of U.S. foreign assistance activities. The result is that recipient-country publics feel their own countries are neglected by the U.S., while they are concerned about the images of American involvement in military conflict.

The good news is that greater knowledge about U.S. assistance can improve impressions of the U.S. abroad. *A poll by two consulting firms in 2006 in Indonesia found a direct correlation between awareness and favorable feelings toward USAID and about America.* In the Council on Foreign Relations study, providing group members with information about the extent of American health, education and job training programs significantly improved attitudes about the U.S. This notion was soon tested in practice. Follow-up focus groups in Jakarta for the Council after the tsunami relief program in early 2005 found a major improvement in feelings to America. This continued during most of 2005, while a USAID-supported publicity campaign was on the air in five major cities. It was followed by a major drop in positive feeling after the campaign ended.

### ***This Report***

This ACVFA subcommittee report calls on USAID along with the development community to help break through the barriers of public ignorance and media hostility regarding U.S. foreign assistance efforts that stand as obstacles to the sustained efforts needed to build a more peaceful and prosperous world. It coincides with a growing awareness at the higher reaches of government of the importance of foreign assistance to this country's national security at a time when Congress has expressed bipartisan support for increased foreign assistance budgets and reinvigorated foreign assistance institutions.

This is an opportune moment for both the future of foreign assistance, as well as the release of this report, which subcommittee members hope will help guide the incoming Administration as it addresses the role that foreign assistance plays in meeting the foreign policy and public diplomacy challenges facing the country.

## **Section I. Domestic Communications**

In order to raise public awareness of the critical role U.S. foreign assistance plays in our national security, and in meeting our global humanitarian goals, we must step up our efforts to build widespread domestic support of foreign assistance.

Innovative public relations and advertising campaigns, relevant to a variety of domestic audiences, is needed for effective and consistent messaging that is more proactive and strategic and less ad hoc and reactive. To catch the attention of the American public and to punch through the crowded media marketplace, USAID needs to have very targeted

and effective public awareness strategies that define the specific message points it wants the American public to know. Targeted themes for campaigns must be timely and relevant, and of compelling human interest or overriding national security concern. Many of USAID's public awareness tools target those who work in government or have vested interests in it – Congress, NGOs, PVOs, large corporations –not the general American public.

As a result of extensive feedback from NGOs, foundations and other private organizations experienced in promoting and distributing foreign assistance, it was clear they believed there needs to be more direct communications outreach to the American public. The subcommittee agrees and proposes building domestic awareness of and support for U.S. foreign assistance programs by:

### ***Promoting Existing Strengths***

USAID has numerous assets that should be used to help establish public outreach as a core function of agency operations:

Partnerships: Through its collaborations and partnerships, USAID already has an elaborate “who’s who” list of groups to support it in potential public awareness campaigns – including private voluntary organizations (PVOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith based organizations (FBOs), community based organizations (CBOs), universities, foundations, corporations and think tanks.

Talent: Whether it is a spokesperson such as the Administrator, high-ranking agency officials, a foreign service officer who has unique expertise both in Washington and the field or a foreign service national or a beneficiary, USAID has rich human resources to draw upon in crafting and profiling public awareness campaigns.

Archives: USAID possesses a collection of photos, stories and related materials that can be leveraged in various forms of media. This rich archive of content can help paint a compelling, humanistic face of USAID.

Administrator Fore should be credited for having reestablished *Frontlines* after a two-year hiatus; this agency publication is a top-flight monthly newspaper that reports on USAID activities, with back issues that serve as a primary reference for the agency's history. Among its most important audiences are employees who benefit from its scope and perspective. The redesigned and up-dated website--as well as policy publications, reports on critical programming, informational brochures and pamphlets and a renewed effort to update a “Telling our Story” archive--are rich sources for an effective public outreach effort.

Proof of Performance: Through the Global Development Alliance (GDA), The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and The President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), among other initiatives, USAID has existing strong accomplishments to offer before the next Administration establishes its own agenda.

LPA/Office of Public Liaison: In March 2008, USAID’s Office of Public Liaison drafted a new public outreach strategy “to increase domestic awareness of USAID.” This plan calls for an Administrator outreach series, a hometown-diplomat program, a speaker’s bureau and an alumni day gathering. It also explored a public service announcement (PSA) branding campaign. While the specific elements of such a communications plan will and should change with the advent of the next Administration, subcommittee members strongly encourage the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) to prioritize a ‘strategic’ and well-plotted approach to USAID communications.

### ***Utilizing Media Opportunities***

While USAID has an impressive record in providing foreign assistance to many in great need, it needs to better tell its stories of success to both domestic and international audiences, and it needs to expand and target its primary channels of communication. By employing media outlets targeted to specific demographic audiences, regional reaches, and cultural diversities and causes, USAID would create a more effective and wider-reaching domestic awareness campaign.

A more targeted and better resourced communications program emphasis is required to effectively reach the public through the electronic media that characterizes the “communications revolution.” USAID should communicate to the public more of what it does. New avenues of communication, including non-traditional sources, such as YouTube, blogs and the use of Web 2.0 or 3.0 should be utilized. As a cost-effective and a credible way to reach younger audiences, the agency should increase its use of social media.

The Global Development Commons (GDC) has been one of the most innovative information programs of the current Administration, and we urge the next Administration to consider its continuation. These targeted channels also should include radio, television, the Internet, print, PSA campaigns and outdoor advertising.

### ***Increasing the Visibility of USAID***

While foreign assistance defines what USAID is about and what it does, the agency is not very well known to the American public, leaving much of its valuable work unnoticed. When asked about U.S. foreign assistance, the typical American generally sees only news images of soldiers airlifting and distributing supplies into an emergency zone. USAID must establish its own identity as the “face” of humanitarian and foreign assistance. Humanizing the agency means purging “governmentese” from its culture and public outreach efforts and inculcating a measure of journalistic professionalism that uses human interest storylines as opposed to statistics and “dollars and cents” reporting.

Utilizing the USAID Administrator and other high-ranking agency officials as ‘ambassadors’ for foreign assistance here and abroad goes a long way toward giving the agency a recognizable “face.” USAID’s Office of the Administrator should produce

annually an *International Development Strategy* document which identifies key messages, mission statements and vision statements that summarize key objectives within each USAID region and functional programming area.

Depicting a greater public presence of the “real” people who work at USAID through the continued promotion and development of such initiatives as the Hometown Diplomat Program offers a feeling of co-ownership for the American public to the programs of USAID.

### ***Emphasize Success Stories***

Additionally, USAID can humanize the foreign assistance program by more fully utilizing the “Telling our Story” resources of the people it serves, the beneficiaries, young and old, from a diversity of cultures around the world. Success stories should be highlighted in media contacts, social media and paid advertising. Using PSAs that showcase foreign assistance successes should be supported by program funds. Such stories should be included in speeches and in visual presentations used at conferences and other forums to tell the foreign aid story.

Communications campaigns should focus on young children under the age of five, and on the programs that USAID is implementing to improve child survival. Other successful efforts to raise awareness, such as the *ONE Campaign*, should serve as models in developing smart media strategies. More emphasis should be placed on themes that resonate with the American people – for example, showing how foreign assistance has *empowered* people through better education, access to healthcare and financial assistance through micro-loans.

Empowerment is a theme readily embraced by the American public and counters perception of “assistance” as large sums of money going to programs and people without accountability. A successful campaign might focus on a variation of the “teaching them how to fish” parable, that is, a positive, proof-of-performance theme that emphasizes how foreign assistance is much more a “hand-up” than a hand-out. Another approach might be to demonstrate results that show ingenuity, thoughtfulness and good stewardship of government resources. This would serve to highlight USAID and foreign assistance in a positive light. Emphasis should be put on activities that have a measurable impact and make an appreciable difference in the lives of real people.

### ***Use Celebrities***

The good offices of celebrities - whether big-name celebrities from Hollywood who support foreign assistance or successful athletes from developing countries who may have benefited from a USAID-sponsored assistance program – should be used in campaigns to raise public consciousness regarding foreign assistance. Their voices are among the most compelling in rallying support for humanitarian assistance. The use of local celebrities and respected voices in our communities could play a significant part in changing prejudices and challenging misperceptions about foreign assistance.

### ***Emphasize Partnerships***

As a result of sustained feedback from NGOs, foundations and other private organizations experienced in promoting and distributing foreign assistance, the subcommittee recommends continuing to join with experienced and dedicated partners in the private and non-governmental communities to increase awareness and support.

To build an accurate picture of how USAID implements foreign assistance, the agency needs to show how it operates, with special emphasis on its implementing partners and the impact it has in the field. It needs to put a “face” on its relationships with PVOs, NGOs, corporations, foundations and universities. Many Americans think that the U.S. government only distributes funds directly to foreign governments, all too often seen as unsavory and corrupt. Americans typically fail to “connect-the-dots” and are unaware that well-known and respected brand-name PVOs like Save The Children, World Vision, CARE and Salvation Army among many others, are USAID partners and primary vehicles for U.S. foreign assistance distribution. On the other hand, USAID's partners must assist in sustaining the "hand that feeds them" by clearly communicating that USAID is their partner and the source of a large percentage of funds that make their good work possible.

### ***Expand Influence Through Public-Private Partnerships***

Use of public-private partnerships is an effective way for the agency to expand its influence. The next Administration should continue to make full use of the strong relationships that the current and previous Administrations have developed. Private sector partners help reach influential audiences that more traditional stakeholders may not.

Administrator Fore’s pledge to increase public/private partnerships offers public outreach opportunities that should continue to be exploited.

### ***Reforming the Agency’s Communications Structure***

Without question USAID needs more public relations and social media professionals to help implement more extensive and effective public awareness strategies.

USAID leadership in the next Administration should undertake extensive new communications and public affairs training programs in Washington, DC, and in the field for all personnel, including Foreign Service officers, Civil Service FSNs and PSCs. Each participant should be instructed on how to write a thorough *Strategic Communications Plan* for their respective missions or target audiences.

In addition, the DOC network should be consolidated under the LPA Bureau. New Deputy Administrator for Public Affairs positions in each USAID Regional Bureau should be considered. Create a new International Development Information and

Communications office within LPA to handle functional planning and implementation of communications programming in order to make better use of new development information technologies into the organization in the missions and at Headquarters.

Finally, free the USAID Press Office from State Department control, and require that the Deputy State Department Spokesperson is a USAID employee detailed to the State Department.

### ***Increase Resources***

USAID funds all corporate communications out of very limited agency operating expenses. There is no stand alone budget for agency communications other than the operational budget amount allotted to the LPA Bureau by the M Bureau through the annual process. This budget is intended to cover all personnel costs (salaries), legislative affairs costs, space usage, equipment and technology. In 2008, this amounted to only \$1.7 million dollars.

USAID communications and public affairs are not included in an embassy's country operating plan. The usual practice is to include them in the USAID mission performance plans and budget documents. However, the field usually establishes a budget for mission or country communications based on amounts left over within the mission budget plans or through use of hard to utilize local currency accounts maintained by the embassy and/or mission.

Many USAID career staff believe that a dollar spent on communications or outreach is a dollar lost for programs such as vaccinating youth in the developing world, distributing textbooks or undertaking democracy programs. Many USAID staff have had a hard time supporting communications programs because they rarely show immediate impact and lack clear and concise performance measures. It should be noted that public attitudes may take months or years of investment before results can be quantified. There is an ingrained bias against communications outreach by many professionals within USAID and State. Communications outreach and public relations are "not substantive" and thus do not warrant strategic status as objectives of U.S. foreign policy.

Augmenting operational expense funding and establishing a budget for domestic outreach and education would be key first steps toward improvement. Amending the agency's policies and procedures to require all missions to incorporate a communications and outreach budget, and a *Strategic Communications Plan*, in the mission budget directly as a line item would be appropriate and helpful in telling USAID's story abroad.

## **SECTION II. International Communications**

The Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) program began in 2004 and was designed to help formalize the communications role within USAID missions. Each mission designated at least one individual to handle communications duties, and training was provided to share best practices across missions and improve outreach overall. This

has enabled a number of missions to identify and undertake foreign assistance media campaigns as a way to effectively reach host country target audiences.

These missions have employed the use of public opinion polling, including focus groups, and relied upon the creative expertise of local public relations/media firms to design and place the campaigns. Funding has been provided primarily from mission program funds although in a limited number of cases the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs matched funding or provided some contribution to the overall cost.

The subcommittee examined the role that overseas integrated foreign assistance media campaigns have played in raising overall awareness levels of USAID and U.S. foreign assistance – and to make recommendations for future activities. These foreign assistance media campaigns have typically involved the use of foreign assistance television, radio and newspaper advertising, which has been coupled with other outreach efforts.

We analyzed foreign assistance media campaigns undertaken in several countries including Bosnia, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Jordan, West Bank/Gaza and Lebanon. Although the campaigns differed significantly in cost, duration and creative design, there were several recurring themes and processes which were consistent. A description of these campaigns can be found in Appendix II.

These campaigns have provided USAID with concrete experiences from which to draw appropriate lessons.

### ***Lessons Learned: Success or Failure***

The hallmarks of successful campaigns have included:

- The campaigns have been **based upon research and facts** – not on presumption or “gut feelings.” For instance, it is not unusual for mission personnel to make assumptions about levels of awareness or attitudes based on their own perceptions. This, however, cannot alone inform a foreign assistance advertising campaign – scientific polling must be undertaken to determine a baseline.
- The campaigns have **utilized local talent and creative agencies** to most effectively communicate with local audiences. These men and women are in the best position to determine messages, backed by survey findings, and determine the creative look and feel of a campaign.
- All of the successful campaigns mentioned have utilized an approach which has an emotional impact, thereby **humanizing the work undertaken by USAID**. The images and voices have been those of assistance recipients, not USAID officials citing statistics and trying to explain work in technical terms.
- The media campaigns have delivered **simple messages** about USAID results and focused on USAID recipients. These campaigns have been grounded in truth and

statistics but have been packaged using simple messages which easily resonate with “average” citizens.

- The foreign assistance media campaigns have been **integrated with other mission and U.S. embassy communication and outreach activities**, including local community events.
- Pre- and post-campaign polling has been critical to create a baseline of USAID awareness and craft appropriate messages. Without such polling, the true impact of the campaigns cannot be measured on target audiences.

The shortcomings and failures can be summarized as follows:

- The campaigns must be **sustained over time for lasting impact** to be achieved. With the exception of USAID/Jordan and USAID/West Bank/Gaza, few missions have designated the appropriate funds or shown a lasting commitment to such types of activities, despite the fact that these campaigns help to raise awareness of program activities and could increase local buy-in.
- Many missions have decided to do these campaigns without **proper resources** committed to the endeavor. In Bosnia, for instance, the mission cut back on the budget which subsequently eliminated the use of pre- and post-campaign polling. No scientific conclusions could be drawn as a result.
- **Short-term communications personnel contracts** serve as an impediment to the sustainability of such campaigns since these are often driven by a strong-willed communications officer within the mission. Given the uncertainty of DOC positions, it is difficult if not impossible to plan six months to one year ahead, despite the fact that this is the norm within program offices.
- These campaigns require **significant advance planning** in terms of the contracting process as well as the creative process. Most of the missions above began the planning process a minimum of six months before the first ad was aired. Because contracting officers are much less familiar with this type of contracting, extra time is often required. In addition, filming is a complicated and time-consuming process, as is the translation and sub-titling process. These factors are often not taken into consideration by Mission leadership.
- Local media and PR firms are in the best position to design these campaigns in consultation with USAID. However, they often do not possess **knowledge of the development process** and there is a learning curve for agency personnel. Given the importance of utilizing simple, well-researched messages therefore USAID staff must be more closely involved than normal.

## **Section III. Key Recommendations**

### **Use a strategic, multi-year set of communications and outreach goals**

There is a convergence of need and opportunity regarding public awareness of U.S. international development assistance, both at home and abroad. The need is simple. Lack of awareness of the levels and benefits of U.S. aid domestically hampers the implementation of an aid program that fully reflects the broad national consensus in favor of such assistance in principle. Overseas, failure to publicize American aid programs means that the political benefit from such programs is limited and their potential to improve the image of the U.S. is unrealized. Fortunately, there is also evidence that the same message will speak to both audiences. This would be a message focused on respectful partnership with effective programs to help build self-sufficiency and support vulnerable populations. Both American and foreign audiences respond to the values of respect, concern and self-reliance that such an approach would involve. There is a chance to conduct it with a single broad message and frame that will reach both segments of the audience. Broader public awareness of and dialogue around assistance programs would itself be part of a more respectful relationship between the development assistance community and the U.S. and foreign publics which they serve.

Therefore, it is recommended that USAID adopt a more strategic multi-year set of communications and outreach goals – identify resources, key audiences and messages, most effective tools and products and partnering opportunities.

### **Provide adequate and consistent budgets**

It is recommended that USAID's annual budget planning, guidance and request processes include specific references to a communications effort; and that mission management assures that adequate resources be requested annually in support of USAID communications and outreach activities. In addition, it is recommended that LPA be allocated adequate funding, as a part of the normal budgetary process, to establish and administer matching funding for mission-based foreign assistance media campaigns in priority, high-profile countries.

### **Train long-term staff**

The DOC role must be formalized within missions either as a permanent full-time member of the program office or that optimally consideration be given to establishing a new USAID Foreign Service back-stop to fill these positions with direct-hire Foreign Service officers.

USAID leadership should undertake extensive new communications and public affairs training programs in Washington and the field for all personnel: Foreign Service, Civil Service FSN's and PSCs, as well. These should require each participant to understand how to write a complete Strategic Communication Plan for their respective Missions or areas of employment.

Unifying the DOC network under the Administrator's Control by placing all DOCs formally under LPA Organizational Control and creating new Deputy Assistant Administrator for Public affairs positions in each USAID Regional Bureau is recommended. Create a new International Development Information and Communications office within LPA to handle functional planning and implementation of communications programming in order to make better use of new development information technologies into the organization in the missions and at Headquarters.

Finally, the elimination of the USAID Press Office as a State controlled operation is recommended as well as requiring that the Deputy State Department Spokesman be a USAID Political Appointee detailed to State.

### **Begin the consultative process early**

Integrated foreign assistance media campaigns require early planning.

The U.S. embassy's political buy-in, particularly in high profile countries, is essential. In addition, political conditions could exist which would affect messages and timing.

Therefore, it is recommended that early consultations take place between USAID and the U.S. Embassy, typically involving the DOC and Public Affairs Officer (PAO). Implementing partners also have an important contribution to make to this process. Having a long-term strategic plan in place and a set of objectives will greatly contribute to this process as will greater USAID/Embassy coordination.

Elevating the profile of USAID by re-establishing the Joint Budget Presentation by LPA and State R for their Senior Reviews is also recommended. Amending the Agency's policies and procedures to require all Missions to incorporate a Communications and Outreach Budget and Strategic Communications Plan in their Country Operations Planning process and reflect those plans in the Mission Budget directly as a line item would be timely.

### **Make use of public opinion polling and focus groups**

Lack of awareness of the levels and benefits of U.S. aid domestically hampers the implementation of an aid program that fully reflects the broad national consensus in favor of such assistance in principle. Remarkably, there has been almost no research on the domestic image of USAID in America or how the broad constituency for development aid could be given a clearer voice. Respecting legal limitations in this regard may require private or public-private partnership to support such work, but such research is essential to support for the Administrator, the Agency, and the broader development community in their communications efforts. Such research is needed on a regular basis to help with the establishment of a global message on behalf of USAID and the development community.

In regard to international outreach, knowledge gathered from both polling and focus groups is essential to the communication process. It helps to establish a baseline of USAID knowledge and awareness of USAID and specific projects. The use of focus groups and polling are important to ensure that messages are crafted in ways that will resonate.

While local polling capacity exists in almost all of the developing countries where USAID operates, it has often proven that firms' capabilities are not as developed as in some western countries and careful attention must be paid to public opinion methodology. In addition, given the language differences it has also been important for careful attention to be paid to the wording and intent of questions.

Since one of the keys to successful international outreach has been the involvement of local public relations/media/creative firms, it is further recommended that USAID continue to contract with local PR/media/creative firms when undertaking foreign assistance media campaigns.

Therefore, it is recommended that USAID use polling and focus groups and that it continue to employ the services of local polling and focus group firms when undertaking foreign assistance media campaigns for purposes of international outreach messaging.

### **Humanize the development work of USAID**

Over the last five decades, USAID has touched literally millions of lives in countless ways – from providing clean drinking water to helping ensure free and fair elections to building the capacity of local and regional governments to provide better services to their citizens. Yet, too often USAID programs have been communicated in facts, figures and technical language that is cumbersome and complicated for the average citizen. Not only does this contribute to low levels of awareness of USAID in the countries in which it is working, it also contributes to low levels of awareness among U.S. domestic audiences.

Therefore, it is recommended that USAID continue to strive to humanize its work – utilizing the voices, images and testimonials of development assistance recipients and partners.

### **Ensure cross-purposing of campaign – to Capitol Hill and within the broader development community**

Although the primary audience for the foreign assistance media campaigns has been host country citizens, many more individuals could be exposed to these campaigns to build greater knowledge and understanding of USAID programs. While fact sheets and other traditional methods have been used to disseminate information regarding USAID programs, a visual demonstration of USAID's impact could prove to be an even more successful way of communicating.

Therefore, it is recommended that USAID missions build a strategy to ensure that USAID/W, other U.S. government agencies and Members of Congress and their staffs are able to access copies of these campaigns.

**USAID Missions:** While increasingly USAID mission directors understand the importance of communications and public affairs to their programs, these views are not matched in budgetary or strategic programming support on the ground. Communications continues to be the source for funding cuts whenever other demands require a foreign assistance on existing funding. It is easy to foreign assistance these accounts because there is no strategic objective or strategic treatment of this asset within USAID mission plans or regulatory vehicles.

**Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART):** While a given major disaster mandates a USAID DART Team response, typically it is difficult to include a strategic or mandated communications or public affairs officer as a component within the DART team even though coverage of the United States Government response has proven to be one of the most potent catalysts in shaping a positive image of America.